

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

MISSING PERSON REPORTING

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CALEA 6th Edition Standard:

332 MISSING PERSON REPORTING

332.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidance for handling missing person investigations.

332.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

At risk - This includes persons who:

- a. Are 13 years of age or younger.
- b. Regardless of age, are believed or determined to be experiencing one or more of the following circumstances:
 1. Out of the zone of safety for his/her chronological age and developmental stage.
 2. Physically or mentally disabled to the degree that he/she is dependent upon an agency or another individual (§ 43.400, RSMo).
 3. Drug dependent, including prescribed medication and/or illegal substances, and the dependency is potentially life-threatening.
 4. Absent from home for more than 24 hours before being reported to law enforcement as missing.
 5. In a life-threatening situation or missing under circumstances indicating that the person's safety may be in danger (§ 43.400, RSMo).
 6. In the company of others who could endanger his/her welfare.
 7. Absent in a way that is inconsistent with established patterns of behavior and cannot be readily explained.
 8. A child missing under circumstances indicating that he/she is in the presence of, or under the control of, a person who is in violation of a permanent or temporary court order and either:
 - I. 14 or more days have elapsed without the person seeking modification of the court order.
 - II. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the child may be taken outside of the United States (§ 43.400, RSMo).
 9. Involved in a situation that would cause a reasonable person to conclude the person should be considered at risk.

Missing person - Any person who is reported missing to law enforcement when that person's location is unknown.

Missing person networks - Databases or computer networks that are available to law enforcement and are suitable for obtaining information related to missing person investigations. This includes the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System (MULES).

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332.2 POLICY

The Columbia Police Department does not consider any report of a missing person to be routine and assumes that the missing person is in need of immediate assistance until an investigation reveals otherwise. The Columbia Police Department does not require a specific amount of time to have passed before beginning a missing person investigation.

332.3 REQUIRED FORMS AND BIOLOGICAL SAMPLE COLLECTION KITS

The Criminal Investigation Division Supervisor shall ensure the following forms and kits are developed and available:

- Missing person report form
- Missing person investigation checklist that provides investigation guidelines and resources that could be helpful in the early hours of a missing person investigation
- Missing person school notification form
- Medical records release form
- Biological sample collection kits

332.4 ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS

Any member encountering a person who wishes to report a missing person or runaway shall render assistance without delay. This can be accomplished by accepting the report via telephone or in-person and initiating the investigation. Those members who do not take such reports or who are unable to give immediate assistance shall promptly dispatch or alert a member who can take the report.

A report shall be accepted in all cases and regardless of where the person was last seen, where the person resides or any question of jurisdiction.

332.4.1 REPORT REQUIREMENTS

The missing person report shall contain at a minimum (§ 43.401(1), RSMo):

- a. The name of the reporting person.
- b. The relationship of the reporting person to the missing person.
- c. The name, age, address and all identifying characteristics of the missing person.
- d. The length of time the person has been missing.
- e. Other information deemed relevant.

For all reports involving a missing child, department personnel shall request that a member of the family or next of kin authorize the release of the medical and dental records of the missing child for analysis by the Missouri State Highway Patrol (§ 43.410.4, RSMo; § 43.410.5, RSMo).

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332.6 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The supervisor shall review the missing person information and ensure resources are deployed as appropriate, initiating a command post as needed.

The supervisor shall ensure applicable notifications and public alerts are made and documented and that records have been entered into the appropriate missing person networks.

The supervisor should take reasonable steps to identify and address any jurisdictional issues to ensure cooperation among agencies. If the case falls within the jurisdiction of another agency, the supervisor should facilitate transfer of the case to the agency of jurisdiction.

332.7 UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

Department members investigating a case of an unidentified person who is deceased or a living person who cannot assist in identifying him/herself should:

- a. Obtain a complete description of the person.
- b. Enter the unidentified person's description into the NCIC Unidentified Person File.
- c. Use available resources, such as those related to missing persons, to identify the person.

332.10 TRAINING

Subject to available resources, the Training and Recruitment Unit should ensure that members of this department whose duties include missing person investigations and reports receive training that includes:

- a. The initial investigation:
 1. Assessments and interviews
 2. Use of current resources, such as Mobile Audio Video (MAV)
 3. Confirming missing status and custody status of minors
 4. Evaluating the need for a heightened response
 5. Identifying the zone of safety based on chronological age and developmental stage
- b. Briefing of [department/office] members at the scene.
- c. Identifying NCIC Missing Person File categories (e.g., disability, endangered, involuntary, juvenile and catastrophe).
- d. Verifying the accuracy of all descriptive information.
- e. Initiating a neighborhood investigation.
- f. Investigating any relevant recent family dynamics.
- g. Addressing conflicting information.
- h. Key investigative and coordination steps.
- i. Managing a missing person case.
- j. Additional resources and specialized services.
- k. Update procedures for case information and descriptions.
- l. Preserving scenes.
- m. Internet and technology issues (e.g., Internet use, cell phone use).

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n. Media relations.